

## PRIVATISING WAR

The UK Ministry of Defence is poised to enter into a welter of partnerships with business, ushering in the most fundamental shake-up of the military for more than 100 years.

Entire training, logistics and supply operations are set to be hived off to big business in the most far-reaching intrusion of the private sector into what was considered the state's preserve.

Most controversially, perhaps, management of the Armed Forces' secret files—which cover Northern Ireland, the Gulf War and a host of sensitive and historic areas—is set to be handed over to a private contractor.

(Source: *The Observer, London, March 2, 2003*)

## EARTH'S CORE TO BURN OUT?

Geophysicist J. Marvin Herndon, who heads Transdyne Corporation in San Diego, has set forth the foundations and demonstrated the feasibility of a giant nuclear reactor at the centre of the Earth.

Quoted in a March 3 press release from the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Herndon provides the strongest evidence yet and sheds light on a previously unappreciated peril that humanity will ultimately face.

Computer simulations of a nuclear reactor in the Earth's core, conducted at the prestigious Oak Ridge National



Laboratory, reveal evidence in the form of helium fission products, which indicates that the end of the georeactor lifetime may be approaching.

"The Earth's nuclear furnace could die in as little as 100 years or as long as one billion years—the uncertainty is great," said Herndon. He notes that at some yet unknown point in time after the demise of the georeactor, the presumed energy source for the geomagnetic field—the magnetic field—will collapse and, unlike other times in the geological past, this time it will be unable to re-start.

(Source: *PNAS, March 3, 2003, PNASnews@nas.edu, via <http://NuclearPlanet.com>*)

## "NEURO-CHIP" READS LIVING NERVE SIGNALS

Researchers in Germany have developed new semiconductor technology that will allow scientists to read and record electrical signals in living nerve cells.

Roland Thewes, senior director in corporate research at Munich-based Infineon, successfully recorded electrical signals in neurons, the specialised cells that make up the nervous system in living organisms and communicate with each other through electrical pulses.

Infineon researchers worked with scientists at the Max Planck Institute, located outside Munich, on the new biosensor chip, dubbed the "Neuro-Chip". About the size of a fingernail, it has 16,000 sensors

that monitor electrical pulses in cells submerged in electrolyte nutrient fluid that coats the semiconductor and keeps the neurons alive. Amplifiers embedded in the circuitry enable each sensor to detect and process the low-voltage signals throughout the different cell layers. The data can then be transmitted to a computer and eventually transformed into a colour picture for analysis.

(Source: *Reuters, February 11, 2003, via <http://www.cnn.com/2003/TECH/ptech/02/11/chips.bioscience.reut/index.html>*)

## FLORIDA COURT RULING SAYS MEDIA CAN LEGALLY LIE

On February 14, a Florida Appeals Court ruled that there is absolutely nothing illegal in a major media organisation lying, concealing or distorting information. The court reversed the US\$425,000 jury verdict of 2000 that was in favour of journalist Jane Akre, who charged she was pressured by Fox Television management and lawyers to air what she knew and documented to be false information.

On August 18, 2000, a six-person jury was unanimous in its conclusion that Akre was indeed fired for threatening to report the station's pressure to broadcast what jurors decided was "a false, distorted or slanted" story about the widespread use of Monsanto's rBGH, a genetically engineered growth hormone given to dairy cows. The court did not dispute the heart of Akre's claim, that Fox pressured her to broadcast a false story to protect the broad-



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caster from having to defend the truth in court as well as suffer the ire of irate advertisers.

Fox argued from the first, and failed on three separate occasions, in front of three different judges, to have the case tossed out on the grounds there is no hard, fast and written rule against deliberate distortion of the news. The attorneys for Fox, owned by media baron Rupert Murdoch, argued that the First Amendment gives broadcasters the right to lie or deliberately distort news reports on the public airwaves.

The Court of Appeals, in its six-page written decision, held that the Federal Communications Commission's position against news distortion is only a "policy", not a promulgated law, rule or regulation.

Fox aired a report after the ruling was handed down, saying that it was "totally vindicated" by the verdict.

(Source: Sierra Times, March 1, 2003, <http://www.sierratimes.com/03/02/28/arpubmg022803.htm>; also see the website <http://www.foxBGHsuit.com>)

## FILTERS NEUTRALISE HARMFUL ELECTROPOLLUTION

Electrical "pollution" at the Melrose-Mindoro Elementary School at Mindoro, Wisconsin, has been making staff members ill, according to District Administrator Ron Perry.

Several teachers and other staff members have complained of headaches, fatigue, facial flushing, numbness, sensitivity to light and sound, tingling and loss of taste and smell. But since a contractor has installed electrical filters, the staff's symptoms have gone away.

"I was somewhat sceptical at first, but now I'm convinced because of what the people have said to me," Perry said.

The problem has been with RF (radiofrequency) electromagnetic fields, which are out of balance, sending microwaves into the rooms and through walls, ceilings and people.

Stetzer Electric of Blair had been updating some electrical wiring when they measured the RF waves in the Mindoro school with a "Fluke" meter. The meter showed that there were considerable amounts of electromagnetic energy in each of the rooms, especially in the computer lab, Perry said.

Workers with Stetzer claimed the neutral wires were too small, therefore electricity came back into the buildings to be ground-

ed. By placing electrical filters in every room, the RF waves instantly smoothed out, he said, and the electromagnetic fields were restored to harmonic balance.

(Source: Melrose Chronicle, Wisconsin, USA, February 28, 2003, via <http://www.strayvoltage.org>)

## RADIO FREQUENCIES USED TO KILL DESTRUCTIVE PESTS

Although the effectiveness of using radiowaves to kill destructive insects in agricultural products has been known for 70 years, the technique has never been applied on a commercial scale. For several decades, methyl bromide has been a mainstay treatment to kill a wide array of quarantined pests.

A recent cooperative effort by four Agricultural Research Service laboratories and two universities aims to overcome the technical barriers to the use of radiowave heating to control pests on a commercial scale in places such as orchards, packing houses and food plants.

Electromagnetic waves of radio frequency (RF) can make molecules vibrate and heat up, in the same way that microwaves heat food. The trick is to kill pest insects without killing the taste or texture of the food they infest.

At the Kika De La Garza Subtropical Agricultural Research Center in Weslaco, Texas, ARS entomologist Guy J. Hallman is investigating the use of RF treatment of citrus against the Mexican fruit fly.

At the ARS Yakima Agricultural Research Laboratory in Wapato, Washington, entomologist James D.

Hansen plans to "bathe" tubs full of apples and cherries with radiowaves to determine exposure times that will kill codling moth larvae without affecting the fruit's quality.

And at the ARS San Joaquin Valley Agricultural Sciences Center in Parlier, California, entomologist Judy A. Johnson is testing the use of this technology to rid walnuts, almonds, pistachios, figs and raisins of the wiggly larvae of the navel orange worm, Indian meal moth and codling moth.

(Source: Agricultural Research Service, Feb 11, 2003, <http://www.ars.usda.gov/>)

## GLOBALISATION CITED AS A THREAT TO US SECURITY

The heads of the main US intelligence agencies warned on February 11 that globalisation, which has been the driving force behind the expansion of the world economy, has become a serious threat to US security.

The Senate intelligence committee was told, in what was a bleak assessment of the threats facing the US, that nuclear proliferation, failing economies, rising anti-Americanism and terrorist-recruiting pose grave dangers.

"Under the right conditions, globalisation can be a very positive force, providing the political, economic and social context for sustained progress," said Vice-Admiral Lowell Jacoby, director of the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency.

"But in those areas unable to exploit these advantages, it can leave large numbers of people seemingly worse off, exacerbate local and regional tensions, increase



the prospects and capabilities for conflict and empower those who would do us harm."

George Tenet, CIA director, said that globalisation had been "a profoundly disruptive force for governments to manage". Arab governments, in particular, he said "are feeling many of globalisation's stresses, especially on the cultural front, without reaping the economic benefits".

(Source: Financial Times, UK, Feb 12, 2003)

## UK GOVERNMENT DOSSIER ON IRAQ WAS PLAGIARISED

US Secretary of State Colin Powell, in his presentation to the Security Council on February 5, sought to reinforce his argument by referring to a recently released British report. He said:

"I would call my colleagues' attention to the fine paper that the United Kingdom distributed...which describes in exquisite detail Iraqi deception activities."

Powell was referring to "Iraq: Its Infrastructure of Concealment, Deception and Intimidation", published on January 30, 2003. The Downing Street authors state that they drew "upon a number of sources, including intelligence material", but a close textual analysis suggests they had little access to first-hand intelligence and instead based their work on academic papers. In fact, they plagiarised quite outdated information, which they then selectively distorted, directly cutting and pasting or near-quoting and even replacing particular words to make a claim sound stronger. In many cases they left spelling and grammatical errors in place.

Apart from the obvious criticism that the British government has plagiarised texts without acknowledgement, passing them off as the work of its intelligence services, there are two further serious problems.

Firstly, it indicates that the UK at least really does not have any independent sources of information on Iraq's internal politics: it just draws upon publicly available data. Thus any further claims to information based on "intelligence data" must be treated with even more scepticism.

Secondly, the information presented as being an accurate statement of the current state of Iraq's security organisations may not be anything of the sort. Ibrahim al-Marashi, who was a postgraduate student at the Monterey Institute of International Studies—the real and unwitting author of much of the document—had as his primary source the documents captured in 1991 for the Iraq Research and Documentation Project. As a result, the information presented as relevant is actually 12 years old.

(Source: By Glen Rangwala, February 5, 2003, via <http://www.globalresearch.ca>)

## INTERNET IDENTITY NUMBERS

The Australian and United States governments are moving towards the implementation of an international Internet numbering system.

Advocates of the system—known as ENUM—argue it will allow people to use one identifier for many different purposes, including mobile phones, email, instant messaging and faxes. ENUM is designed to accelerate the convergence of the telephone network and the Internet and is

expected to offer a huge boost to online telephony services. ENUM stands for "e164 Number Mapping", where "e164" is the International Telecommunications Union (ITU-T) code for the international telephone address number plan.

When ENUM domains become active, users will be identified by their telephone number including the country code. What this means is that a phone number such as "+46 8 976 1234" would be mapped to the 4.3.2.1.6.7.9.8.6.4.e164.arpa Internet address in a process that is expected to become automated and transparent to the user.

So far, 13 countries that are members of the ITU have signed on to the e164.arpa proposal and are planning trials.

(Source: Optus News, February 14, 2003, <http://www.optusnet.com.au/news/>)

## SPIES PROTECTED IN UK BANKING FRAUD LAWSUIT

A mega-scandal much older than Enron or WorldCom is about to shake the British financial establishment. More than a decade after the spectacular collapse of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), its creditors are finally to put the Bank of England in the dock.

BCCI remains the world's biggest-ever banking fraud, and the colour and complexity of the scam is awesome. It laundered drugs money, bribes and dictators' loot, and allowed an endemic culture of fraud to flourish for decades.

The Bank of England was the financial regulator in 1991 when the BCCI crashed with £7 billion of undeclared debts, and has long been accused of turning a blind eye to fraud at the Middle Eastern bank. Now it faces a giant lawsuit brought in London by BCCI's victims, who claim it is guilty of negligence amounting to "misfeasance", or wilful misconduct. BCCI's creditors are claiming up to £1bn in damages and are breaking new ground by challenging the Bank's statutory immunity against being sued.

Then there is the small matter of the role played by Britain's intelligence services, whose relationship with BCCI has long been questioned. Did MI6 use accounts at the secretive bank to pay sources and operatives around the world? Some researchers claim BCCI channelled funds to Mujahideen fighters in the 1980s and, later on, to Osama bin Laden.

Jack Straw, the Foreign Secretary, secured public interest immunity orders last



year to block the disclosure of "sensitive" passages from an unpublished appendix of the Bingham report, which dealt with the security services.

Other material has been kept out of creditors' hands by invoking a statute that also relates to national security. In an extraordinary twist, however, the UK Government is refusing to identify exactly which statute it has invoked. Government lawyers may fear that to identify the statute would effectively reveal the nature of the material they are trying to keep secret.

The BCCI creditors, however, are not satisfied. They believe they are not being given a proper chance to challenge the government's non-disclosure.

(Source: The Observer, January 19, 2003)

## BENETTON GIVES HIDDEN MEANING TO TRACKSUITS

The Italian retailer Benetton's imminent introduction of "smart tag" tracking technology into clothing sold in its shops will soon be the largest example of a trend emerging in the retail industry.

Benetton's Sisley line of clothing will soon contain a Philips radiofrequency ID tag that will replace bar codes, which have to be manually scanned. An RFID tag will communicate its location to Benetton's computerised supply chain network, allowing the retailer to learn stock levels at a glance and make restocking decisions quickly, even automatically.

Karsten Ottenberg, senior vice-president of Philips Semiconductors, based in Hamburg, says the smart tags will be imperceptible to the wearer. They will store information on the garment's style, size and colour and its path through the manufacturing and stock chain.

The ID tag—an antenna-bearing chip, smaller than a grain of rice—is embedded in the clothing's label, and any item returned to the store automatically re-enters the inventory. It is only effective when, say, about three feet from a scanner.

While there is no indication Benetton intends to track its customers with the tags, privacy groups are worried that the technology could lend itself to unauthorised customer monitoring.

An RFID tag could be programmed to store information about, say, the person who bought a garment. It could allow a retail chain to take note each time that garment was worn into a store.

(Source: Ananova.com, March 11, 2003, <http://www.ananova.com/news/>)

## LEAKED TRADE SECRETS PROVE THREAT TO PUBLIC SERVICES

Secret leaked documents have revealed European demands in the WTO negotiations that have been quietly underway in Geneva since 2000. These documents provide a harsh wake-up call to the world about what is really at stake in these global "commercial" negotiations.

When most people think about trade, they conjure up images of ships ferrying steel beams and sacks of coffee between nations and of agreements about cutting tariffs and quotas on trade in goods. In reality, however, today's "trade agreements", such as the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the 1995 World Trade Organization (WTO), have little to do with trade. Instead, they focus on granting foreign companies new rights and privileges within the boundaries of other countries. They attempt to constrain federal, state and local regulatory policies and to commodify public services and common resources—such as water—into new tradable units for profit.

The leaked documents reveal negotiations that will expand the scope of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), one of the 21 pacts enforced by the WTO. The "GATS-2000" talks are promoted by the United States and European nations on behalf of multinational service-sector conglomerates. Up for grabs at the negotiating table is worldwide privatisation and deregulation of public energy and water utilities, postal services, higher education and state alcohol distribution controls; rights for foreign firms to local business loans; elimination of specific state laws about land use, professional licensing and consumer protections; and extreme deregulation of private-sector service industries such as insurance, banking, mutual funds and securities.

Europe's demands of the USA and 108 other WTO signatories provide "smoking gun" evidence, after months of speculation and concern, about how these secretive WTO negotiations threaten essential public services upon which people worldwide rely daily. Think of GATS as a Trojan Horse. Appealingly dubbed a "trade agreement", it actually contains a massive attack on the most basic functions of local and state government. You might ask what the GATS provision creating a new right for corporations to establish a "commercial presence" within another country has to do with cross-border trade. The answer: nothing. The terms allow a foreign firm to set up subsidiaries in other countries or acquire local companies under more favourable terms than their domestic competitors get. For instance, once a service sector is covered under GATS, governments may not limit the number or size of service providers—meaning that applying zoning rules on beachfront development or limits on concessions in national parks to foreign firms would be forbidden. This is why many people consider GATS to be a backdoor attempt to revive the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), the radical investment pact that was killed by public opposition in 1998.

The GATS not only promotes privatisation of public services, but it makes reversing failed privatisation experiments extremely difficult for national, state and local governments. Under GATS, if cities seek to bring a privately operated utility back into the public realm, they only can do so if their government agrees to compensate all WTO countries for their companies' lost business opportunities. For example, Atlanta just reversed a disastrous water privatisation involving a French company. If the United States agrees to Europe's GATS-2000 demands to subject water to GATS disciplines, such reversals could only occur if compensation was offered not just to that company but to all WTO signatory countries. The secret European document also revealed a demand to include retail electricity services under GATS, meaning that privatisation nightmares like California's energy deregulation would be nearly impossible to fix. GATS also sets strict constraints on government regulation in the services sector—even when those policies treat domestic and foreign services the same. GATS allows federal, state and local regulations to be challenged as barriers to trade if they are not designed in the least trade-restrictive manner.

The leaked EU documents have prompted civil society groups worldwide to call for a moratorium on the "GATS-2000" talks and for a public process involving state and local officials. The clock is ticking.

(Source: By Lori Wallach, Director, Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch, March 6, 2003, <http://www.citizen.org/trade>, via <http://www.guerrillanews.com/globalization/doc1147.html>)